

Minutes of the Meeting of the Life After NESWC Committee
Thursday, February 24, 2005
7:00 PM Room 204 Acton Town Hall

The following members of the Committee were present for all or a part of the meeting: Peter Ashton, Ann Chang, Pat Clifford, Sally Edwards, Carol Holley, Bob Johnson, John Murray and David Stone.

Members of the public also attended this meeting which convened at 7:10 pm.

Agenda: No formal agenda was presented; however, the Committee agreed to review the report of the Technical Review Committee on the responses to the RFPs and to make preliminary recommendations for the Board of Selectmen regarding the Town Meeting warrant for the Annual Town Meeting.

John Murray gave a brief presentation outlining the various options to be considered by the committee. He noted two key decisions to be made:

1. A decision regarding how trash will be collected and disposed of once our current contract with Waste Management ends; options include continued operation of the transfer station, or closing the transfer station and contracting for curbside pickup. Waste Management has indicated a desire to terminate the NESWC contract July 1 2005, rather than September.
2. A decision regarding “final” capping of the landfill and potential uses for the site; options include the town capping the landfill and retaining ownership/control of the landfill site, or accepting the proposal entitled the Acton Business Center which would include capping and development by a private sector partnership.

The discussion first centered on decision #1. Questions were raised about where the trash would be disposed of under the first option – spot market or re-up with Waste Management for nine months or longer. The pricing on the curbside option proposed by Waste Management is economically attractive for citizens and significantly below what others in town are currently paying for curbside. This offer expires 10/15/05; it is priced out for five years.

Other points made during the discussion included the need to have a plan for FY 06 as well as a longer term plan which would include dropping the brokerage contract. The status of the transfer station schedule effective July 1, 2005, for two open days per week was clarified. Questions were raised about flat fee vs. pay as you throw option as well as size of containers. The concern of Waste Management/NESWC’s contractual option to “meet” any service selected (hand from the grave) was also discussed. The committee asked that there be clarification and definition of these issues.

Various committee members reiterated their concerns that there had been insufficient time for public education and agreed that public input should be sought during the spring regarding the proposals received. Consensus developed that Annual Town Meeting was too soon to bring a resolution to the Town for a vote, but waiting until the fall was too late as some of these offers would expire and nothing specific could be expected to happen over the summer. A proposal was made to recommend a late May Special Town Meeting at which the trash disposal options would be considered – it is anticipated that one option would be presented as a recommended option but voters would understand what the “either or” would be. Mr. Stone moved that the Selectmen on the LAN Committee include the request for a Special Town meeting in the late spring in their report to the full BOS. The motion was duly seconded and agreed to without objection.

There was general agreement that a brief presentation similar to what Mr. Murray had presented to the committee would be useful for April Town Meeting in order to update the voters on the information received during the RFP process. The information would update the State of the Town discussion and serve as a prelude to a Special Town Meeting.

With regard to the second decision, the committee directed staff to make certain further inquiries regarding both the landfill capping options. The questions included:

- Verification (peer review) of CDM’s estimates for the town’s potential cost of capping the landfill
- Inquire of other towns that have recently capped, particularly any that may have used CDM, to see what costs were;
- Need more details on how Dickinsen would do the capping: materials to be used, whether the transfer station could/should remain open during this process, how long it would take.
- More investigation of the Reading project in terms of materials used to cap landfill, cost, etc.
- More information including an appraisal for the land relating to the bid price/package being offered by Dickinsen;
- What type of zoning change would be needed and would it affect other areas of town?

Mr. Murray indicated that he would draft any necessary language for the Warrant article.

Ms. Chang moved that the committee reaffirm its earlier motion regarding days of operation for the transfer station effective July 1, 2005, to be Wednesday and Saturday. The Committee agreed to the motion with Mr. Murray dissenting.

The committee intends this program would be in effect at least until the current contract ends, and could then be continued depending on decisions made at the special town meeting. The current brokerage program supporting the NESWC contract requirements would therefore be curtailed, and this decision would be implemented regardless of whether the override passes. By doing so, staff believes the transfer station operation can be run on a breakeven basis with a modest increase in the sticker fee should the program be carried forward into the next annual cycle. Finally the Committee strongly supported a Wednesday and Saturday schedule as opposed to staff's recommended Friday-Saturday because the midweek day provided greater flexibility to citizens and avoided potential problems of people being out of town on long weekends and thus unable to dispose of their trash.

The committee discussed public information/outreach activities and Mr. Ashton agreed to develop a draft schedule of meetings with town committees and commissions as well as other interested groups for consideration at the next LAN meeting.

At 9:00 pm the Committee adjourned to reconvene on Tuesday March 15 at 7:00 pm at the same location.